

Story 1298 (1989 Tape 1

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The Prince as Bird

In the old days when the sieve was in the straw,¹ there lived in a certain country a very wealthy merchant who had three daughters. The merchant wanted his youngest daughter to be educated, and so he sent her daily to a hoca² to be taught the Koran. This youngest daughter worshiped frequently, and she was zealous in her pursuit of religious knowledge. She was very different from her older sisters, who spent most of their time sewing, engaging in various kinds of handicrafts, and helping their mother with the housework. The youngest daughter spent her time praying, reading the Koran, and learning from the hoca.

Whenever the merchant had exhausted the store of goods

¹The sieve is never in the straw. While threshing grain, workers pass the detached grain and finely ground straw through a large-mesh sieve. Longer pieces of straw which may still have grains attached to them do not pass through and will need further threshing. So the straw is in the sieve, not the sieve in the straw. This is a single clause in a long introductory formula of nonsense jingles, a formula known as a tekerleme.

²A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training.

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that he sold, he went to a larger city to buy new supplies of these materials. Before he took such a trip, he always asked his wife and his daughters what they would like to have him bring back for them. His wife and two elder daughters usually wanted jewels, beads, and silk and satin clothes. The youngest daughter, on the other hand, usually asked for a prayer rug, a string of prayer beads, a prayer cloth, or some other religious object. On each of his trips the merchant carefully purchased exactly the items that had been requested.

One day when it had been announced that the merchant was preparing to make another trip to buy supplies, the hoca asked the youngest daughter, "Is it true that your father is about to make another business journey?"

"Yes, it is."

"Instead of asking him to bring you the kinds of gifts you have always before requested, this time ask him to bring you something quite different. Ask him to bring you a living pearl."

"All right," said his pupil

When the father was all ready to leave home, he asked his wife and daughters what they wanted him to bring them. His wife and elder daughters chose the kinds of things they had always asked for earlier, but--to his surprise--his youngest daughter asked for something different from her usual request. "Father, I want you to bring me a living pearl," she said

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"Very well," said the father and departed. When he arrived at the large city, he first bought the supplies needed for store and he had these goods loaded on the beasts in his caravan. Then he bought, with no difficulty, the things that his wife and elder daughters had requested. But he was unable to find the living pearl that his youngest daughter had requested. In shop after shop he asked, "Do you have what is known as a living pearl?"

Each time he asked this question, the shop owner answered, "No

Finally the merchant went to see an old friend of his who was a jeweler. He said to him, "Jeweler friend, I have frequently done business with you in the past, and now I need your help. My youngest daughter asked me to bring her a living pearl. I do not understand what kind of pearl that is, and no one seems to have one for sale in this city. Can you tell me what it is?"

The old jeweler was a wise man, and after thinking for a moment, he said, "Your youngest daughter wants something that is nothing like an ordinary pearl. Our padişah has a son named İnci,³ and I am afraid that it is him that she wants."

³İnci means pearl. It is a very common Turkish name for girls, but it is not often used for a boy's name.

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"No, you do not know what kind of a girl my youngest daughter is," replied the merchant.

"You have been buying jewels and other things for a long while, but this is not the kind of jewel we ever sold you. I advise you to go to the palace and tell the son of the padişah that your youngest daughter wishes to marry him."

The merchant was confused. "How can I tell him such a thing? I can't!" But the merchant loved his youngest daughter dearly, and he did not want to disappoint her, and so, after further thought, he said, "For the sake of my daughter I shall go and talk to the prince."

Going to the palace, he found the son of the padişah and introduced himself to him. "I am a merchant from such and such a place. Although she has not said so directly, my youngest daughter apparently wishes to marry you."

"That would be possible if you were to fulfill a condition I would require. Here is the condition. When you return home you are to have an attractive house built for us, a house that

be complete in every way and decorated in good taste. After the house is ready, your daughter is to strike together these two feathers, and when she does that, I shall become a bird and fly to her there. Once I have arrived there, I shall return to my present human form."

Even more confused than he had been before, the merchant answered, "All right. I shall do as you direct. For the sake of

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my daughter I should endure any kind of difficulty." Putting the two feathers in his pocket, he returned home with his caravan.

After the wife and two elder daughters had received their gifts, the youngest daughter asked, "Where is mine?"

The merchant responded, "My daughter, I want to speak with you privately."

When she and her father were alone, the youngest daughter asked, "What is the matter?"

"What you asked for was actually the son of the padişah of our country. I talked to him, and he agreed to marry you on the condition that I have a house built for the two of you. He sent these two feathers to you. When the house is completed, you are to strike these two feathers together, and then he will fly to you as a bird. Once he is here, however, he will return to his human shape."

The youngest daughter was greatly pleased. At the same time, however, she was amazed, for she had asked as a gift from her father only what the hoca had told her to ask.

The merchant had the construction of the house started at once. After it was built, he furnished and decorated the house very well. The girl then moved into the new house, and as soon as she was settled there, she struck the two feathers together. Soon after that she saw a bird flying toward the house, and she quickly opened all of the windows. After the bird had entered, it shook itself and turned into a human being. As soon as she saw this handsome man, she fell in love with him.

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Every evening after that, he flew to the house, entered a window, and became a man. He spent the night there with youngest daughter, and then in the morning he became a bird again and flew away. This continued for a long while, and two lived happily together in this way.

One night the girl said to İnci, "Tomorrow I shall go to the public bath with my mother and sisters. Can you give me some money for that purpose?"

"Have you not been making up our bed every morning?" asked the son of the padişah.

"No, my older sister makes up our bed," she replied.

"Ha-a-a! Well, every morning before leaving, I place a bag of gold beneath your pillow," he said.

"Really?"

"If you do not believe me, then look under your pillow right now."

Lifting up the pillow, she found that there really was a bag of gold there. "My older sister took all of the bags you left previously, and she never told me anything about them!"

After that, the youngest sister herself made up their bed. On the first morning that she did so, her older sister asked, "Why don't you let me make up your bed for you as I have been doing right along?"

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"It is not at all difficult," said the youngest sister, "and so from now on I shall make it up myself."

The oldest sister understood from that that the youngest sister now knew what had been going on. The oldest sister had always been jealous of the youngest sister, but now her jealousy increased so much that she decided to do something harmful to the wife of the son of the padişah. She thought and thought about this until a really evil idea came to her mind.

When her sisters and her mother were ready to go to the bath on the following morning, the oldest sister said to them, "I do not feel well enough to go with you. I want to stay here at home and sleep."

"All right," said the others, and they left.

After they were out of sight, the oldest sister went outside and called to a passing neighborhood boy. She said to this boy, "Take this money and buy me some needles, some nails, and some skewers with some of it. Whatever part of the money is left is yours."

"All right," said the boy, and he ran at once to the marketplace and bought needles, nails, and skewers.

While the other women were at the bath, the oldest sister went to the youngest sister's house. Going to the window through which the bird always entered, she mounted all of the

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needles, nails, and skewers on the sill and frame of the window with the sharp points sticking out.

When the group returned from their day at the bath, the youngest sister went to her house and struck together the two magic feathers. This time, however, no bird arrived. She struck the feathers together time after time, but nobody came

The youngest sister was so worried about this that in the morning she told her father about it. She said, "I struck the feathers together again and again, but my husband never came last night."

"Perhaps there was something else he had to do," said her father.

The youngest daughter tried again to bring her husband to her on the second night, on the third night, and on the fourth night, but still he did not appear. After a while she lost all hope and remained in her room, neither eating nor drinking. Her family grew very worried about her.

One day her room seemed very stifling to her, and she decided to throw open the window. As soon as she did so, she saw all sides of the window had protruding from them sharp needles, sharp nails, and sharp skewers, and all of these sharp objects were caked with dried blood.

When she saw this, the youngest daughter lost control of

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herself. Going to her mother, she asked, "Mother, who in this household could do such a thing to me? The fact is that my husband tried to come to me but was wounded by these sharp objects and had to return." Turning to her father, she said, "I shall go to that place where the padişah lives and find my husband!"

"Don't say such a thing! How could you go there?"

"Yes, I shall go there, and to do so I shall need a pair of iron shoes and an iron walking stick, a pair of nylon shoes and a nylon walking stick, and a pair of leather shoes and a leather walking stick."⁴

Her father gave orders to have all these things purchased, and he took them to her as soon as he could get them. "Here are the things that you said you wanted," he said.

Putting some food in a saddlebag, the youngest daughter

⁴Iron shoes and an iron walking stick are parts of the symbolic language of the Turkish folktale. They symbolize a very long and arduous journey that one is required to make by self-compulsion, by circumstances, or by some other person. The journey is often an ordeal which the traveler must endure in order to find some lost person or object. Sometimes the journey ends when the iron shoes and/or iron walking stick have/has been worn out. Within the context of a folktale a character actually uses these objects (which do not exist in real life), but the moment they are mentioned, the folk audience knows what they are intended to signal.

The additional nylon and leather pieces of equipment are apparently just a whim of the narrator. We have not encountered them in the 1200+ tales preceding this one in ATON. They are functionless, and nylon and leather walking sticks are in themselves ridiculous.

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u + ✕ lost husband

set out in search of her lost husband. After traveling for some distance, she grew tired and sat down by a fountain to rest. Many times along her way when she grew tired, hungry, or thirsty, she would stop briefly to rest in this way. One she stopped at a fountain to eat some bread. Then she tried to sleep, but she could not do so because of her worrying about her husband. She wondered whether this had happened to him or whether that had happened to him. As she lay there awake, pigeons alighted in a tree near the fountain and began to talk to each other

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One pigeon said, "Do you know what great trouble that girl is enduring?"

"No, I do not," said the second pigeon.

"While she was living happily with her husband, her older sister was very jealous of her. She placed needles, nails, and skewers before the window through which her husband, in bird form, entered each night. When her husband arrived at her home he was badly wounded by these sharp objects and had to return to his father's home. Now he lies in bed in very serious condition as a result of those wounds."

The girl remained absolutely motionless and very quietly continued to listen to the conversation of the pigeons.

The second pigeon now asked, "Well, what should she do?"

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Self-sufficient birds

11 { une } "If she were alert she might kill both of us with her iron walking stick. She might slaughter both of us, putting the blood of one of us in a bottle, and taking the flesh of the other as meat. Then when she found her husband, if she took him to a bath and at the same time fed him the cooked meat and poured the blood over him, her husband might get well and survive."

"Is that really possible?"

"Yes, it is."

While they were talking this way, they were killed by girl. She then put the blood of one pigeon in a bottle; she salted the flesh of the other pigeon and packed it in her saddlebag. After this, she forgot her fatigue and continued on toward her destination. After a while she came to a different kind of countryside. "Is this such and such a territory?" asked people along the way.

"Yes, it is," they answered.

"Can you tell me where the padişah's palace is?"

"Yes," said a person there, and that person led her to the palace.

She saw that the palace, both inside and outside, was crowded with people. She also saw in the garden a young woman who was distraught about the condition of the padişah's son, and she was told that that young woman was a daughter of the

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padişah. The youngest daughter of the merchant shouted in the direction of the padişah's daughter, "I am a famous doctor even though I am unknown to most people here."

*Physician's
mother*

The padişah's daughter was glad to hear this, and she ran at once to her parents, saying, "Father! Mother! There is an unfamiliar young woman here who shouts, 'No one here may know me, but I am a famous doctor.' Perhaps she can heal my brother's wounds."

"No, there is no hope," they answered. "We have brought here famous doctors from all over the world, and they were unable to help him. The best treatments have been useless. We also brought in seers and magicians, but they too failed to cure him. We know now that our son is going to die

But the girl continued to plead. "Mother, permit this woman to see my brother at least once. There is always a possibility that someone may find a remedy. Why don't you come outside and talk with this doctor?"

When the padişah and his wife went outside, they asked the youngest daughter of the merchant, "Who are you?"

"Although I am unknown in this area, I am a doctor who may be able to cure your son."

"What treatment would you use?" asked the padişah.

"Don't worry about that. Just have this pigeon meat boiled and provide me with the use of a public bath. During

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the treatment no one else may be present."

The padişah agreed to meet these requirements. He had servants prepare a bathhouse for the treatment, and after it was ready, he had other servants carry his son there.

The youngest daughter of the merchant first made her husband sweat in the steam room of the bath. Then she rubbed his body all over with the pigeon blood which she had brought in a bottle. Her husband's body was in terrible condition, but after it had been rubbed with the pigeon blood, it began to recover somewhat. He opened his eyes briefly and asked, "Where am I? Why am I here?" It seemed that he almost recognized the

"Don't try to talk right now."

Then she went to the door of the bath and took the cooked pigeon meat from the servant who was waiting outside the door with it. She said to the patient, "Without trying to speak, you must eat this meat."

After eating the pigeon flesh, the son of the padişah regained full consciousness, and now he did recognize his wife. "Why are you here? What happened to me?" he asked.

"Don't try to talk any more right now. We shall discuss all of this later." Then she ran to the door and gave this order to the servant: "Run to the padişah and tell him to come here. Tell him that his son is now almost completely well."

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The padişah rejoiced when he heard this good news. He to the bath and said, "O mysterious girl, wish from me anything you want, and I shall grant your wish. If you so desire I shall give you this entire country and even my title of padişah, for you were the only one able to save the life of my son."

"I want only one thing, and that is your son," she answered.

The padişah was astonished and confused by this request. "How can that be?" he asked. "But wait! You have not yet told me who you really are. Who are you?"

"I am your daughter-in-law! All of this trouble was brought upon us by the older of my two sisters, who was jealous of our happiness." She then described from beginning to end everything that had happened. The padişah was delighted that his son had recovered, and he was well pleased with his newly discovered daughter-in-law.

A wedding celebration was arranged, a celebration that lasted for forty days and forty nights. The son of the padişah and the youngest daughter of the merchant were married again. They were so happy right there that the youngest daughter did not return to her own city but remained in her husband's city.